

*The Christian Interpretation of
Prophecies vindicated.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the
Cathedral Church of St. PAUL,
Novemb. 3. 1701.

B E I N G

The EIGHTH for the Year 1701. of the LECTURE
Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle, Esq;*

By *GEORGE STANHOPE, D. D.*
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

L O N D O N,

Printed for RICHARD SARE at *Grays-Inn-Gate* in
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The Right to the Ministry of the Lecture

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2 PET. Chap. i. v. 19.

We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, wherunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your Hearts.

MY Design from these Words being to vindicate the Christian Interpretation of the Old-Testament Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, I did in a former Discourse propose to pursue it, by speaking to these Four Points.

I. *First*, By assigning some Reasons, why the Predictions relating to this Matter should be so obscure and liable to be differently understood.

II. *Secondly*, By shewing that, such Obscurity notwithstanding, those Prophecies were an Instruction sufficient for the Age and People to whom they were imparted, and the Purposes God intended they should serve.

III. *Thirdly*, By making some Remarks upon the Ground and Manner of the Christian's Interpretation of them, such as may prove the Vanity of the *Jewish* Objections against our applying them to the Blessed *Jesus*.

IV. *Fourthly*, By representing the true force of Arguments drawn from this Topick of Prophecies; and how far the proof of the Christian Religion does really depend upon them.

Of the *First* and *Second* I have already treated; and, the weight of the Other Two yet behind requiring all the Consideration that can be allowed them at this time, I shall proceed directly to the *Third*.

III. The Apostle by this Exhortation to take heed to the

Word of Prophecy, does plainly intimate, that the full Benefit of so imperfect a Light is not to be attained without great care and diligent attention, in them who profess to walk by its guidance. And thus much is allowed in the Controversy now before us. In the Divine Authority of the Prophecies, and that such of them as were intended of the *Messiah* shall certainly meet their entire Completion in Him, We and our Adversaries both agree. But, for their proper sense and Application, in This it is our Misfortune still to differ. Here Each complains of the Advice in my Text being too much neglected; The want of *taking due heed to this Word of Prophecy*, We say is the Cause why the *Jews* deny; The same again They pretend is the Cause, why Christians affirm, *Jesus of Nazareth* to be the *Messiah*.

Now in a Matter thus depending, what can this *Heed* to be *taken* mean, or whither does it extend? So far as I can apprehend, only to these Two Cautions. *First*, That Men observe the true aim and design of the Prophecies; And this, in the Case now under debate, would be done by urging none of them as concerning the *Messias*, which were not really intended of him. *Secondly*, That They keep to the true sense of the Prophecies; And this would be done by applying them to no Person or Event, but such as their Natural or otherwise Allowed Construction plainly evinces them to be accomplished in. Now the shewing that the Christians, in alledging the Old-Testament Prophecies as Evidences of *Jesus* being the *Messiah*, have proceeded strictly according to the *Former* of these Rules, is what I mean by vindicating them in the *Ground*; And, that they have as religiously observed the *Latter*, is what I mean by vindicating the manner of their interpretation.

I. That they have gone upon a sure Ground, by urging no Prophecies as concerning the *Messiah*, which were not really intended of him; I conceive the following Reflexions may serve to satisfy any Man, that considers them fairly and attentively.

i. The

1. The Article of the *Messiah* being of so great and general Importance, that, as I formerly observed, all the Prophets are acknowledged to bear witness to it; we cannot imagine this Testimony defective in its main Design; which was to leave such Marks upon record, as might sufficiently distinguish the *Messiah* at his Coming.

2. This Testimony being given at several distances of Time, by several Persons, and all directed and inspired by God for that purpose; we cannot doubt, but that the following Prophecies added new Light to those that went before: And this not only by revealing some fresh Matter in which the Former had been silent, but also by guiding Men to a clearer understanding of things but darkly express'd, and such as they, till thus enlightned, had entertained more confused Notions of. These Two Particulars follow so evidently from what was said upon my *Second Head*, that the bare mention of them now is enough.

3. But then it follows in the next place too, that these distinguishing Characters of the *Messiah* must have been signified long before they were applied to *Jesus*. This is manifest from hence, that the Spirit of Prophecy had ceased, and the Persons, whose Books complete the Canon of the *Jewish* Scriptures, had been dead Four hundred Years at least before the Preaching of our Saviour. Consequently the *Jews* either had from that time such Predictions as sufficiently characterized the *Messiah*, or they never had them at all.

4. These Prophecies being many of them obscure, as upon other accounts taken notice of under my First Head, so particularly from their being not separately delivered, but mingled and interwoven with Others relating to Events of different kinds; 'Tis natural to think, the *Jews* had some fixt and well-known Rules † for distinguishing those concerning the *Messiah* from the Rest. What all those Rules were, it may not be possible for Us at this distance precisely to determine: But some appear even yet upon their Books. And had there been none such whereby the Antient Synagogue

† See Judgment of Jewish Church against Unitarians, Ch. ii, iii.

was

was determined, we could never account for the Application of sundry Prophecies to the *Messias*, which yet both *Jews* and *Christians* agree in referring to him; without sufficient Evidence of their relating to this Matter, either from the Words themselves simply considered, or from the Context and immediate Occasion of them.

5. If there were any Period of time set out for the *Messiah's* Coming, in which the expectations of his Approach were more eager and general, than at any other: It is but reasonable to presume, that Men's Minds would then be more inquisitive and awake, and their Studies turned almost entirely upon this subject; Consequently, The sense of that Age deserves to be esteem'd of greater moment in the present Debate, as the Belief of that Age must have been less liable to be imposed upon, either with false Marks of the *Messiah*, or by a wrong Application of the true Marks, than any other Age or Set of Men whatsoever. Now, that the Interval between the beginning of *Herod's* Reign over *Judaea* and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, was exactly such a Period as we are speaking of, might easily be made appear from undeniable Proofs, drawn from the Circumstances of that Time and People, and the attestations not of Sacred only, but even of *Jewish* and *Prophane* Writers. But then it is as true, that this was the very season of our Lord's conversing, and his Disciples propagating the Gospel, among the *Jews*; the most improper and unlikely juncture that could possibly be taken, for bringing any of that People over to the belief of a *Messiah*, if the Person professing himself and taught by others so to be, did not punctually answer those Characters, which, according to the received Principles of that Age, were necessary to frame an Idea of the *Messiah*, conformable to the Prophecies concerning him. Consequently the success of such a Doctrine at such a critical time is of more value to infer the Truth of it, and that its Preachers went upon substantial grounds, in the Testimonies produced out of the *Jewish* Scriptures especially, than the same success could have been at
any

any other time that we can think of before or since.

From these Premises laid together, I see no reason to doubt or decline the Judgment of the Synagogue in our Saviour and his Apostles Days; or, whether, not only the Scribes and Chief Priests, but even the generality of the People, were not so well acquainted with the Prophecies, as not to be deceived by any falsely pretended to foretel the *Messiah*, but to be perfectly well satisfied, which were the main of them at least, that the Holy Ghost did and had been constantly thought to point him out by. But then it must, I think, seem probable in the highest degree too, that in all their Conferences with the *Jews*, our Lord and his Apostles went thus far in perfect Agreement with the Synagogue. And, though this be a Conclusion which the Notions of the more Modern *Jews* may appear to debar us from, yet I hope the making it may be abundantly justified from these few Considerations.

1. It is evident to Common Sense, that in all Disputes between Men of different Opinions no progress at all can be made, no Conviction possibly wrought, unless the Arguments used for this purpose set out upon Principles received and uncontested by both Parties. Whatever is not so must not be taken for granted, but effectually proved it self, and established by proper Reasons and Authorities, before it will be admitted as a proof to any subsequent Proposition. Now the whole of our Controversy with regard to this Matter turning entirely upon these Two Questions; *Whether the Predictions alledged from the Old Testament do Truly belong to the Messiah*; and then, *Whether these be so fulfilled in Jesus, as to prove him that very Messiah*: What was the Method taken to convince Men in this state of the Dispute? Search the New Testament throughout, and you shall not find from one end to the other so much as one formal Argument offered against the *Jews*, upon the First of these Points: Not One Objection or Complaint from the Adversaries of the Christian Faith, of Scriptures wrested and misapplied to the *Messiah*, which were intended of and fulfilled in some other Person: Which yet in

in reason ought, and no question would have been done had this been as doubted and disputable a Point as the Other. Its being not so is the true account of the whole Matter in Issue being reduced to the Second Question, *viz. Whether the Prophecies allowed to concern the Messiah, were rightly and faithfully applied to Jesus of Nazareth.* This is the Point in which our Lord enlightned the Disciples after his Resurrection; The inconsideration he rebukes them for, was their being short in attending to *all* (a) that the Prophets had spoken, the whole of which might have satisfied them, that Suffering was as essential a part in the Messiah's Character as *entering into his Glory*; but the Remedy applyed for cure of this Infirmary, was, by expounding the Scriptures of Moses, and all the Prophets, to convince them that *They concern'd himself.*

(a) Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 27, 44, 45. Hence 'tis the Jews are charged with Infidelity. Had ye (b) believed Moses, says our Lord, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me: And, Search (b) the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of Me. Did the Jews of that Age doubt whether Moses wrote and the Scriptures testified of the Messiah? No, but the thing they stuck at was, whether Jesus were the Person written and testified of as such. And yet this was a Belief which vast Multitudes, and many the best Learned of the Jews, embraced upon this manner of Reasoning; Men that neither wanted Skill to detect, nor Motives to refuse any false Reasoning in the Case. And it must be confess'd, that, had the Apostles put upon them so grossly, as the obtruding a wrong, or but a controverted Foundation without proof; and thus gained them over to a Religion labouring under such discouragements and prejudices as the Christian then did; no instance parallel to this can e'er be found, of Preachers so forsaken of all Modesty, and Profelytes of all common understanding, since the beginning of the World. Let the Jews scornfully reply in their Forefather's Language, Have (c) any of the Pharisees or of the Rulers believed on him? Yes. Pharisees and Rulers both believed; and we are not at a loss for

(b) Joh. v. 39, 46.

(c) John vii. 48.

for reasons why more of them did not. But One such Convert is a better Argument for us, than Ten thousand Infidels can be against us; Since, had the Prophecies produced on this occasion been known to make as little for the Apostles purpose, as the Modern *Jews* would persuade us they do, it is not to be conceived how they should win one single Proselyte. Or if they did, He must be, as the then Pharisees styled their people, accursed indeed with ignorance, not only of their Law, but of all common Reason, above the most barbarous people that ever lived.

For, Though somewhat hath been offered to this purpose † heretofore, yet to clear the Matter a little more, let us for † *Serm. v.* once suppose these mistaken Allegations objected against us. Then must they needs be owing either to Ignorance, or to Design. If to the *Former*, one would expect to meet them most in Men most unacquainted with that Traditional Sense of the Scriptures, which seems to have been received in the *Jewish Church*. If the *Latter*, 'tis as reasonable, they that use them should be sure of their Men, and choose out only Hearers ignorant in these Matters to practise thus upon. But now, as God would have it, the Fact is directly contrary. St. Paul, who was brought up at (d) the Feet (d) *Acts* of Gamaliel, and had profited in the Law and the Traditions of *xxii. 3.* the Fathers above his Equals, is the Man that uses more of *Gal. i. 14.* these Proofs than any other Writer; And most of all, when industriously opposing the Prejudices of Men versed in the Law, and most intemperately zealous for it: The cast of an Eye upon the Epistles to the *Romans*, *Galatians*, and *Hebrews*, puts this beyond dispute. St. Matthew again is thought to have written for the use of the *Jews* more particularly, and to have written for that reason in the *Hebrew Tongue*. It highly concerned Him therefore to be upon his guard, who had to deal with so competent Judges, and such as would be sure to shew him no favour; as indeed they ought not, if he played them foul out of their own Scriptures. And yet it is obvious, that this Evangelist is more express and positive

sitive in his manner of applying Prophecies to our Blessed Lord, and urges a far greater number of them, than any of the rest.

Now how absurd, how infinitely despicable this Method must have rendred him, had the Aim of those Prophecies been a point in Controversy, an Instance or Two will suffice to demonstrate. What St. *John* says of his own is equally true of all the Gospels : † *These things were written that Men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing they might have Life through his Name.* Which way then does St. *Matthew* go about to induce this Belief? At the very first setting out, after an account of *Mary* the Mother of *Jesus* being found with Child before any Cohabitation with her Husband, and the Testimony given to her Innocence by an Angel ; *All this*, he says, *was done (e), that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, &c.* But, What was all this to his purpose, if that Prediction were not confessed to belong to the *Messiah* ? What is the profit he labours to make out of it ? That the *Messiah* should be born of a Virgin ? No ; But, this taken for granted, that *Jesus* having fulfilled that Prophecy in being so born, therefore He was the *Messiah*. But how easily had all this pomp of a Quotation been confounded, had any body then thought of *Hezekiah*, or the Prophet's Son, who we have since been told are the only Persons character'd by it ? Again, *Jesus*, he says, taught the Multitudes in (f) Parables, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, *I will open my Mouth in Parables, &c.* How frivolous is this, supposing *Asaph* to have no regard to the *Messiah* and his Doctrine, or that the *Jews* allowed him to have none, when he penn'd the lxxviii. Psalm ? Once more. *They crucified him, (g) and parted his Garments, casting Lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted my Garments among them, and upon my Vesture did they cast Lots.* A fruitless, nay a senseless Allegation, if the persons then argued with had already imbibed that

† John xx.
31.

(e) Matth.
i. 22, 23.

(f) Matth.
xiii. 34, 35.

(g) Matth.
xxvii. 35.

that fancy of their Successors, that *Esther*, or *David*, or the people of the *Jews*, and not the *Messiah*, were the true subject of the xxii. Psalm.

But, if the reasoning upon false Principles of his own were so odd an undertaking in the Circumstances of this Evangelist, to father those false Principles upon his Adversaries themselves is ten times more monstrous and insufferable. Yet this he manifestly does in two famous Instances. One is that resolution of the Chief Priests and Scribes, when consulted by *Herod* where *Christ* (*b*) should be born; (*b*) *Matth. ii. 4, 5, 6.* These are introduced, determining *Bethlehem* for the place, and grounding that Determination upon a Prophecy of *Micah*. Thus are they made to abet in most solemn manner the Opinion of a Passage belonging to *Christ*, which Others with as much confidence affirm to have no respect to any but *Zorobabel*. The Other is that puzzling Question, *How Christ could* (*i*) *be David's Son, when he in Spirit* (*i*) *Ch. xxii. call'd him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou* *41, -- 46.* *on my right hand until I make thine Enemies thy footstool?* To this, *St. Matthew* says, *No Man could answer Jesus a Word, neither durst any Man after that encounter him with any more Questions.* But had the cx. Psalm been then understood to belong to *Abraham*, or *Eliezer*, or *Hezekiah*, or indeed to any but *Christ*, sure this was no such difficulty to strike those Oracles of the Law all dumb at once. *Trypho* found something to reply to *Justin Martyr* upon it, which had the Pharisees then been apprised of, and acknowledged for Orthodox, they must of necessity have struck *Jesus* dumb. And his Apostle had been unpardonably impudent, to write the account of their being thus gravell'd, and send it abroad in their own Language, to their own Countrymen, within eight or nine Years after so remarkable a Conference, had the least shadow of a Doubt remained, whether *Jesus* attacked them upon a true Principle. Multitudes of like Examples might be produced, but these more than suffice to shew that our Lord and his Apo-

titles cannot be imagined to have argued from any Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, but such as really belonged to him ; that they could not possibly make advantage of any, which were not by their Adversaries and the whole *Jewish* Church acknowledged so to do ; that, upon any other Terms but these, they had been not only the most unfair, but the most unadvised Disputants that ever undertook a Cause ; For indeed they had but exposed their own confidence and folly, and to all intents and purposes ruined that Doctrine, which they took so awkward and impracticable a way to propagate and maintain.

(k) John i. 9.
viii. 12.
(l) Numb.
xxiv. 17.
(m) Isa. xlix.
ix. compare
Luke ii. 32.
(n) Zech. vi.
12. rendred by
the lxx. ἀνα-
γχαίν.
(o) Malach. iv.
2.
(p) Psal. xix.
compare Rom.
x. 18.
(q) Matth.
xxi. 44.
(r) Psal. cxviii.
22. compare
Matth. xxi. 42.
Acts iv. 11.
Ephes. ii. 20.
(s) Isa. viii. 14.
xxviii. 16. com-
pare Luke ii.
34. Rom. ix.
33. 1 Pet. ii.
6, 7, 8.
(t) Dan. ii. 45.
(u) Joh. x. 2.
11.
(w) Psal. xlii.
(x) Isa. xl. 11.
(y) Ezek.
xxxiv. xxxvii.
(z) Zech. xiii.
7. compare
Matth. xxvi.
31.

2. That which confirms this Assertion yet more, is the Frequency and the Significance of those many Titles and Allusions applyed to *Jesus* by Himself and his Disciples. For, do we think these had no farther regard than merely to the Effects and Qualities which rendred such Resemblances apt and lively ? Yes certainly, they had all a retrospect : For, though their fitness was the Cause of their being used by the Prophets, yet the true reason why they are adapted to *Jesus* in the *New*, is that they were the known Characters of the *Messiah* in the *Old* Testament. Consequently, He, who should assume these to himself, did by that very Action constructively assume the *Messiahship*. Thus *Jesus* is (k) called *the true Light* and *the Light of the World*, not only as he enlightens every Man that cometh into it ; but because he is Balaam's (l) *Star*, Isaiah's Light (m) of the Gentiles, Zachary's (n) *East*, Malachi's Sun (o) of Righteousness, and David's Sun (p) that goes from one end of the Heaven to the other, and from whose cheering light and genial heat nothing is hid. Thus is he a (q) *Stone*, not only as bruising them that fall upon him, and grinding them on whom he falls to Powder, but because the Corner (r) *Stone of David*, the stumbling Stone (s) of Isaiah, the Stone (t) cut out of the Mountains without hands in Daniel : So is he a (u) *Shepherd*, because (w) *David*, and (x) *Isaiah*, and *Ezekiel* (y), and *Zechariah* (z), had represented the *Messiah* as such. He

is

is a *Door* (a), with Allusion to that *Key of the House of David* given the *Messiah*, which openeth and no Man shutteth, and shutteth and no Man openeth. To understand the propriety of our Lord's calling himself the *True Vine* (b), we must have an Eye to *Isaiah's* Song of the (c) *Vineyard*, to his *Root of Jesse*, to his tender Plant, to *Jeremy's* (d) and *Zechary's* (e) *Branch*. And to comprehend the fitness of the Baptist styling him the *Bridegroom* *, the *Forty fifth Psalm*, and the Book of *Canticles* are necessary Keys. In a word, Every attentive Reader may soon satisfy himself, that these and many other like Resemblances proceed constantly upon the Ideas of the *Old Testament*; that the design and just importance of the Phraseology of the *New*, are never to be rightly accounted for, but by comparing it with the Idioms of the *Old*; and that every Application of these to *Jesus* is a virtual declaration of his being the *Messiah*. Now this I take to prove somewhat more than my former Particular; For, whereas then I only urged, that in set Applications of Prophecies the Apostles must needs have taken their Measures from the received Notions of the *Jewish Church*; Here it is made most highly credible, that the Characters of the *Messiah* were so familiarly known, so unanimously agreed on, that even the Metaphorical Descriptions of him were esteemed proper and sufficient Insinuations that *Jesus* was that Person. Elegance and Aptness are common to these with other Similitudes, but there is an Energy and Weight peculiar to these alone; a mystical and noble importance, which no Author less than the Spirit of God could contrive, and no Subject less than the Son of God could fill and be commensurate to.

3. But, that we may not be reproached with depending altogether upon Presumptions, though These alone may in some Cases, and should (one would think) in This, convince any reasonable Man, who considers the full force of them; I add, *Thirdly*, That the Allegations made from the *Old Testament* of Prophecies concerning the *Messiah* are abundantly

(a) Joh. x. 9.
compare Isa.
xxii. 22. Rev.
iii. 7.
(b) Joh. xv. 1.
(c) Isa. v. xi.
1, 10. liii. 2.
(d) Jerem.
xxiii. 5. xxxiii.
15.
(e) Zech. iii. 8.
vi. 12.
* John iii. 29.

abundantly justified by the very Expositions of the later *Jews* themselves. For, although Errour have been in the present, as in most instances we find it, fruitful and wild to the last degree ; yet still so over-bearing is the power of Truth, that it is very difficult, if barely possible, to name one single Prediction of the many applyed to the Blessed *Jesus*, which One or Other of their most celebrated Writers do not acknowledge to belong to the *Messiah*. The proof of this by entring into Particulars, is what the limits

† See to this purpose, *Raym. Mart. Pug. Fid. Joh. Voisin. Observat. in Pug. Cap. 40. Huet. Demonst. Evang. Prop. vii. & 9. Judgment of the Jewish Church against the Unitarians.*

set me here render impracticable ; but those among us who are Conversant in † Authors that have laboured in this Controversy, know what I now affirm to be undeniable Matter of Fact.

4. It may indeed be replied, that the Judgment of private Persons is of small consideration, when opposed to the Sentiments of the present Synagogue in general : That the Modern *Jews* do absolutely deny to the Prophecies quoted in the New Testament the Views there ascribed to them, and apply them to quite different purposes and persons : That this on the other hand, in a people valuing themselves so much upon uninterrupted Tradition, is a violent Presumption of the antient Synagogue being in the same Notions. The Fact, so far as relates to the present Synagogue, is in great measure true. The *Jews* have now quite shifted the Question, by putting Matters in debate between us upon a different foot ; and representing those things as doubtful, nay false, the truth whereof, I have been all this while persuading you, their more ingenuous Ancestors never demurr'd to at all. But then this flying off from the Notions of their Forefathers will not appear a thing, either strange in it self, or of any mighty Consequence against us ; If we consider, Either, (1.) The Occasion of this Change, very probably imputed to the destruction of their City and Polity, which, confounding all their Expectations of a glorious *Messiah*, put them upon new Measures, by

by applying to *Hezekiah*, *Zorobabel*, or some other person highly favoured of God, those Predictions which they saw must needs be fulfilled, while their State and Temple stood : Or, (2.) The Darknes which would naturally follow upon their long Dispersion and unparallel'd Calamities, when they fell into the hands of persecuting Powers, who hated Them and their Religion most implacably : Or, (3.) The monstrous Inconsistencies of their new Expositions, not more irreconcilable with Ours than with one another ; and, even taken apart, so manifestly absurd, that in many cases the very Text it self bears evidence against Each of them. Infomuch that some † of them have even been driven to deny that the *Messiah's* Coming was a fundamental Article of Faith, or supported by any other Authority besides that of Tradition : Or, (4.) The neglect of applying themselves to the Written, and attending wholly to their Oral Law ; affecting to be accurate in Ceremonies while they continued careless of their Doctrines : Hence this sort of Learning (g) hath been cryed up to a degree of Profaneness, and the Study of the Scriptures discouraged and vilify'd even to Blasphemy. It being an Observation said to be as near our Saviour's time as the Reign of *Trajan* (h), that *Reading the Old Testament made the Jews turn Hereticks*. Which sure is no small Credit to our Cause, since by that reproachful Title then, as for the most part now, the *Jewish* Idiom means no other than *Christians* : Or, (5.) Their violent Partiality and furious Prejudices against *Jesus* and his Disciples, which stuck at nothing though never so false and wicked to oppose and disgrace them : Witness that impious and venomous heap of Lies raked together in their *Toldoth Jesu*, and other execrable Blasphemies against his Person and Doctrine. We cannot wonder if this Rage put them upon that (in comparison modest) Treachery, of tampering with their Scriptures, and labouring with all their might to make them look another way : We need no other Confession of this, than what an Interpreter of great (i) renown hath left us in his Comment on the xxii. *Psalm*.

† See Judgment of Jewish Church, Chap. 26.

(g) Buxtorf. Synag. Jud. Cap. 1. Hoornbeck cont. Jud. L. 1.

(h) Judgment of Jewish Church, Chap. xx.

(i) R. Sol. Jarchi.

Pſalm. Whoſe feeble attempts to wreſt that Evidence out of our hands come all at laſt to this; *Our Great Maſters have interpreted this Pſalm of Meſſiah the King, but I ſhall interpret it of David himſelf; that we may have wherewith to answer the Hereticks*: And leaſt of all is this departing of the Preſent from the Antient Synagogue, to be either doubted or greatly regarded; if to all theſe former Reflexions we add, (*Laſt-ly,*) That Judicial Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Heart, ſo often and expreſſly threatned, ſo viſibly and lamentably inflicted, on this once Elect People of God. He in his infinite Mercy remove it, bring back theſe wandering Sheep to that Fold from whence they have ſo miſerably ſtray'd, and open their Eyes effectually, that *they may ſee the wondrous things of his Law*, and its agreement with his Bleſſed Goſpel!

The Sum of my Argument is thus much. If the Apoſtles cannot be ſuppoſed, with any propriety of Reaſoning or proſpect of Succeſs, to offer, or indeed to be heard, in the Allegation of Prophecies concerning the *Meſſiah*, which the *Jewiſh* Church at that time did not agree to be intended of him; If this Agreement were ſo general, that even Figurative Alluſions from thoſe Prophecies were uſed as Inſinuations familiar and well underſtood by the common People, that the Perſon ſo characteriſed was the *Meſſiah*; If all the Prophecies thus alledged appear even yet by ſome or other of their moſt eminent Doctōrs to be interpreted of the *Meſſiah*; And if the Diſagreement of the preſent and antient Synagogue may be very fairly accounted for: Then, I may hope, the Chriſtian Interpretation of Prophecies, as to the Ground of it, is vindicated. They are very quarrellſom Adverſaries indeed, who will not endure to be diſputed with upon their own Terms; and We contend that the Apoſtles did ſo, that they were bound to do ſo, that they could not profit themſelves of any Predictions in Their Scriptures by doing otherwiſe: All which abundantly invalidates the *Jew's Second* Objection againſt Us, mentioned in the beginning of my † Laſt Diſcourſe.

† Sermon. vii.
p. 7.

II. The next thing I obliged my self to, is, To justifie the *Manner* of this Interpretation, by shewing, that the Christians in applying these Prophecies kept to their true Sense, and urged them for no other Events, than such as their natural or otherwise allowed Construction proved them to be accomplished in.

Now, upon this Occasion we may do well to observe, that the Christian Interpreters have proceeded in somewhat different Methods; Each, as they apprehend, agreeable to the Principles of our Adversaries, in expounding the Books of the Old Testament. For,

I. *First*, Some there are, who think the allowing any passage of Prophetick Scripture more Views or Senses than One, to be a very dangerous and improper way of Interpreting; that it weakens the Authority of these Sacred Oracles, and gives advantage to our Enemies; Exposes them to the Insults of the Profane upon the account of pretended Ambiguities; And hardens the *Jews* in their Infidelity, who (now at least) hold this for a Principle, that the Prophets had but one single Intention in all they spoke; Consequently, that, when any Prediction is once fulfilled, it hath answered the utmost purpose of the Holy Ghost, and they have done with it for ever. They therefore deny us the privilege of applying to Christ, what we acknowledge in any sense or respect to have been fulfilled in *Joshua*, or *David*, or *Solomon*, or any other person whatsoever. And not They only, but some Christians too urge, that a Prophecy, to make any benefit of it, ought to agree with its Person or Event, at least if with different Events, yet still with the same Person, so as to decypher him as punctually as a Logical Definition does the thing defined by it: That otherwise the End of such Predictions is lost, by leaving the Mind in Darkness and Suspense, when not confined to One determinate Subject, exclusive of all Others. They admit, that many eminent Persons were Types of the *Messiah*; upon which account the Passages concerning Them ministred pertinent Occasions, laid hold on by the Holy

ly Ghost, for breaking out into lofty Flights, and very magnificent Characters of the *Messiah* so typified ; But they will not allow this Typical Capacity to extend so far, as to give those persons the honour of having any share in the Predictions themselves. These they judge incommunicable to any but the *Messiah* ; and say, that when the meaner and more immediate Subject was once left, all that concerns the sublimer and more remote does in no degree interfere or participate with the Other. Hence they deny to *David* any part in the xxii. and lxix. and so to *Solomon* in the ii, xlv, or lxxii Psalms ; Any farther than as the Afflictions of the One, and the Glories of the Other, rendred the Composer's Meditations upon These a convenient Step and proper Introduction to the much greater Sufferings and Glories of the *Messiah* prefigured by them. And thus they account for those vainly boasted Objections of Incoherence, which Men not well acquainted with the Spirit and Manner of Prophetick Scripture raise such a dust about : Whereas a more familiar and attentive Conversation with these Books might soon evince, that these Exceptions have no ground at all, except in the Ignorance or Inadvertency of those that make them.

They think it no small advantage to this Opinion, that the most antient Fathers of the Church seem all along to have proceeded thus in their disputes with the Enemies of the Truth. Thus *Justin* against *Trypho*, *Tertullian* against the *Jews*, *Origen* against *Celsus*, and (for the generality) *Eusebius* in his *Demonstration*, appeal to the Prophecies given in Evidence, as incapable, in any propriety of Speech, of being interpreted of Any but our Blessed Lord alone. But above all, they plead the Examples of the inspired Apostles themselves :
 (k) Acts ii. and xiii. St. Peter (k) in his Sermon on the Day of *Pentecost*, and St. Paul in that to the Synagogue of *Antioch*, plainly excluding *David* from those words of the *Sixteenth* Psalm, though uttered in the first Person, *Thou shalt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy one to see Corruption*. And, Lastly, Though they look upon the Apostles arguing from
 Types

Types as an irrefragable proof of the *Jews* of that Age owning them; yet they do not discern the same Evidence of their owning a first and secondary View of Scripture, by any such Expositions left us in the New Testament.

2. On the other hand, St. *Jerom* †, and the generality of † *Hieron. in*
Interpreters in the following Centuries treading in his *Dan. xi,*
Steps, have allowed several Prophetick Scriptures to proceed *and xii.*
upon more Views than One, to contain more Senses than One,
and to respect more Persons than One. Hence they conceive
in some both an Historical and a Prophetical Importance, of
which St. *John* hath given a famous Instance, when apply-
ing to our Saviour dead upon the Cross, and the Soldiers
thereupon forbearing to break his Legs, that Precept touch-
ing the Paschal Lamb, *A Bone (1) of him shall not be broken.* (1) *Joh.*
Others they esteem entirely Prophetical, but so as to concern *xix. 36.*
some nearer Event first, and afterwards some nobler and more *Exod. xii.*
distant: And This again so implied, that sometimes Both *46.*
are verified in the natural Signification of the Words; some-
times the One in the Literal and directly, the Other in the
Mystical or Figurative, and obliquely. Thus the Expressi-
ons often run so high, as to denote Events and Characters
too gloriously great for the Thing or Person next at hand;
which is esteem'd a certain Indication of their having in
prospect some Other more remote, in which they are to find
their just Completion. 'Tis thus that Many have understood
the *Seventh* of *Isaiab*, concerning the Prophet's Son first and
in part, but ultimately and strictly of *Jesus Christ*. Thus,
that of *Nathan* to *David*, thus the ii, lxxii, lxxxix, and cxxxii
Psalms, concerning *Solomon* subordinately, but *Christ* in the
full Latitude, and most exalted Sense. Thus the xxii and
lxix Psalms, of *David's* barbarous Treatment in the Figura-
tive, but of the Indignities and Sufferings of the *Messiah*, in
their adequate and literal Importance. Thus, *Lastly*, Those
of *Isaiab* xxxiv. *Dan. ix.* *Joel ii.* *Malach. iv.* and several such
like, of the Calamities and Devastations of the *Jews*; the
First by *Nebuchadnezzar*, the Second by *Antiochus Epiphanes*,

all of them by *Titus* afterwards ; And not only so, but of these Events again, as so many Shadows of the dreadful Day of Judgment ; and the Period put to that Typical Age and State, as the last great Emblem of the Consummation of all Things, and the Dissolution of the whole World.

And indeed in the *Jews* being a Typical People, (a Notion, which, as I have argued formerly, must needs have once been current Doctrine, and could not be derived from any but themselves) In this, I say, it is, that these Interpreters conceive such a twofold importance of the Scriptures to have a sufficient Foundation. They are not aware of any Injury done to the Word or Truth of God by it ; because these are not Passages ambiguous and dark, like the deceitful Oracles of the Old Heathens, which might be turned even to contrary Senses, and were industriously contrived so to be : But the various Senses of the Prophets are all consistent with, nay all subservient to each other ; and the Prophet's design is not to be thought wholly answered, till his words have been made good in every one. They hold it very consonant to the Circumstances of Men, carried as it were out of themselves, of Minds enlarged and agitated by a Divine Impulse, to deliver the Thoughts suggested to them, in a manner not strictly methodical and confined to one Subject throughout. But, as the Persons who were Types of Christ were not so in all, but in some particular regards only ; (*David*, for the purpose, in his Afflictions, and *Salomon* in his Glory :) So nothing hinders why the Prophecies which had an Eye to Both, might not in some Passages respect Both ; (the One in a strict, the Other in a qualified sense,) in some the Antitype only, in some again the Type only, and not the Antitype at all : by reason the Person Typical, though he did in Some, yet did not in the Circumstances there mentioned, sustain the Character of a Type. He that shall consider the vii. of the Second of *Samuel*, the lxxxix. and cxxxii Psalms, (they presume) will at once understand, and assent to this Distinction. They urge this, as a Method exceeding proper for the Levitical

tical Dispensation, cherishing a constant hope of, and carrying Mens Eyes forward to future and better, through a Vail of present Blessings; and propounding the *Messiah* as the End and Substance of all the mystical Figures and Adumbrations of the Law. Thus each of these Predictions so conceived was more significant and valuable, when the Blessing was not only promised, but in some measure bestowed; And every partial Accomplishment was a fresh confirmation to their Faith; An Evidence and Pledge paid down in hand of its noblest, most spiritual, and best Completion, which all the Ideas ministred by the words could possibly import. Upon this account, (they contend) the Truth, as well as the Wisdom and Goodness of God, was not the less but more conspicuous. Again; They find this an effectual Expedient for removing all the Difficulties pretended to arise from such Prophecies taken in one simple View, by preserving the coherence of the Text, and that Historical Sense, which the Thread of the Author's Discourse and the immediate Occasions of the respective Passages seem to require. They urge again, that the Modern *Jews* refusing such Expositions of Scripture in the dispute between us, they cannot think an Argument sufficient for laying them aside; Not only because they herein plainly contradict themselves, by condemning in Us a Method which they at other times magnify to so extravagant a degree, as to say that every *Letter (m) in their Law hath vast Mountains hanging at it*; (Senses they mean of weighty and spiritual import :) But more particularly, because it ought not to appear strange, that They who have thought it convenient to abandon in great measure the Doctrine of Types, should so far consist with themselves, as to disclaim the Interpretations grounded upon it. When yet, for what appears, these too might speak the true sense of the antient Synagogue, and be renounced, like that Doctrine, for the service to the Christian Cause, which the later *Jews* were apprehensive might be done by it. And, *Lastly*, though they think this Method reasonable in many, yet they do not insist upon it in all

(m) See
Huet. Dem.
Evang.
Prop. ix.
Cap. clxxi.
§. 8.

all Prophecies. Some being so directly, so incommunicably intended of the *Messiah*, that, when the *Jews* labour most to find another Subject for them, they run themselves into Absurdities, as manifest as they are inextricable.

The balancing these Allegations on either side, did not Necessity compel, yet Decency and Choice would determine me to leave to Others. Let it suffice at present, that the main Cause is secured either way. For Both agree the Prophecies to be properly fulfilled in Christ, and in none but Him. 'Tis only with this difference, The One asserts them to be in no sense or respect at all, The Other, though in a limited and subordinate, yet not in their ultimate design and full extent, to be completed in any other Person.

But be that as it will, I add yet farther, that no rational Doubt can remain, whether the Apostles and first Christians did not alledge every Prophecy quoted out of the Old Testament, in that very Sense which the *Jews* then received, and were persuaded the Holy Ghost intended it in. The Arguments before insisted on prove this with equal force, as they did the Former Branch of this Head. For no Man need be told, that the Attempt had been as impertinent, the Affront to Mens Reason as insolent and daring, the Event as fruitless, nay as fatal to their Cause, had they imposed a false or controverted sense on the Predictions confessedly belonging to the *Messiah*; as it would have been to urge such Predictions as were not acknowledged to belong at all to the *Messiah*. 'Tis therefore as trifling and ridiculous for the *Jews* to tell us, that *They pierced my Hands and my Feet; they parted my Garments among them, and upon my Vesture did they cast Lots, and They gave me Gall to eat and Vinegar to drink*, were Figurative Expressions only; when we see what use the Evangelists make of their literal and plain sense; As it is to persuade us, that *David* or *Esther*, or the *Jewish* People, are the persons meant in those Psalms, without any regard at all to the *Messiah*, when we find what advantage is taken from those Psalms literally fulfilled in *Jesus*, to prove him the *Messiah*. In truth,

truth, the strictest Masters of Science have allowed in many Cases a manifest absurdity of the Contrary, to amount even to a Demonstration. And the Presumption opposite to what I am contending for is so exorbitant and monstrous, that nothing less than a supposition of downright madness in the Apostles, and the utmost degree of stupidity in the Jews they had to deal with, can ever make it go down. 'Tis well observed by a Great Man (n) of our own, that *the Jewish Traditions contrary to the Law of God have done less hurt to Religion, than the loss of some Jewish Traditions, or Rules for interpreting Scripture, which had been received among the anti-ent Hebrew Rabbins, but rejected by the latter Jewish Masters.* For, had it pleased the Providence of God to transmit to us their Antient Sentiments, we should questionless have been able out of their own Mouths to detect and condemn their wicked Shifts; by shewing expresly, what (as it is) we have the greatest Moral Certainty of, that the Apostles took no one step toward their Conversion, but upon firm ground, and such as the Principles of their own Synagogue supported them in.

(n) Dr. Jackson. Tom. ii. Sect. ii. Ch. ix. P. 590.

And now, if this be so, the Jew's * Objection mentioned * the last Day, concerning our forced and mystical Construc-
 on of Scripture, is effectually silenced. For, if we bring no
 Texts concerning the *Messiah*, which they did not allow to
 concern him; nor urge them in any sense which they did
 not admit; then I am sure the Jews cannot profit themselves
 of, nor can We fairly be accountable for such pretended In-
 coherences. It lyes upon the Synagogue to vindicate it self;
 since whatsoever Reasons were sufficient for referring these
 Passages to the *Messiah* before his Coming, the same will not
 fail to bear us out in interpreting them of the *Messiah* after
 his Coming.

* Serm. vii. P. 8.

IV. My Third Particular, by carrying me so far hath some-
 what abridged the Liberty I hoped to have had for consider-
 ing the *Fourth* and Last Head, viz. *The proper Force of Argu-
 ments drawn from this Topick of Prophecies, and how far the*
 Proof

Proof of the Christian Religion doth really depend upon them.

1. That which renders the setting this Matter in a true Light the more necessary is a Notion advanced by some, that Miracles are the adequate and sole Foundation of a Christian's Faith; and that the Prophecies of the Old Testament, as applied to *Jesus* in the New, are not so much Arguments for receiving Him in the quality of the *Messiah*, as apt Accommodations of Passages literally and properly fulfilled before, but mystically and secondarily suited to Other Actions and Events afterwards. By which Congruity they illustrate and confirm *some* Truths already assented to upon Evidence of another kind.

In order at once to confute this Opinion (greatly injurious to the Authority of the antient Scriptures, and the Methods of propagating the Christian Religion,) and to establish the Point I am now upon, so far as the time will permit me, I desire *Four* things may be observed.

1. That Prophecy is it self one Species of Miracles. The foretelling distant Events purely contingent is in its own nature as impossible to be done, except by His direction, who, having all Events absolutely at his own disposal, alone can inform Men what he designs to bring about of this kind; as are Healing Diseases with a word, Raising the Dead, or any the most amazing Operations whatsoever, without the Interposition of his Power, who, Having all Causes and Effects under his Governance, alone can enable Men to act beside or above the settled Course of Nature. Hence Each of these are placed upon an equal foot under the *Jewish* Law. The Worker of a Sign or Wonder was to be believed, provided he taught nothing derogatory to the Worship of the True God. The Foreteller of things which accordingly came to pass was to be received as a Prophet of the Lord, upon the like Condition. The Reason in both is the same; That God, by whom only either of these could be effected, will not permit Credit to be given to Impostures and humane Inventions, by such Operations as himself hath reserved and appointed

appointed for Divine Truths, and Seals of an Authority derived from Him. In this Sense therefore it may be said indeed that the Christian Religion stands on the bottom of Miracles; But then, since Prophecies themselves are Miracles, this is a Sense foreign to the Case in hand. For it renders the Opposition implied to be between them altogether impertinent, and amounts to no more at last, than a Distinction without any real Difference.

2. Taking then Miracles and Prophecies apart, thus I think we may truly say, that Miracles alone had been Evidence sufficient of the Christian Faith, supposing no Prophecies ever to have been given. This the *Jews* cannot upon their own Principles deny; because adhering to a Law established by Miracles, but not predicted (so far as can be made appear) by any Prophet. I know, they insist upon the Appearances of the Divine Majesty at Mount *Sinai*, as Convictions more self-evident, than Any ever exhibited before or since. But this comes not up to the Point in debate. We are not now comparing Miracles with one another, but enquiring whether Any Miracles, the most illustrious and evident that can be, are a sufficient and adequate foundation of Faith. I know too, that God's Promise to take the Seed of *Abraham* for his peculiar People may be esteemed an implicit Prediction of those Ordinances whereby he separated them to himself. But it is to be noted, that they were the People of God from the time of that Promise, that the Scripture (o) styles them such during their Bondage in *Egypt*, and that Circumcision had (p) sealed this Covenant long before the giving of the Law. Whatever Evidence then sufficed for the Authority of Their Law, the like might have sufficed for the Authority of Our Gospel. Consequently, Miracles alone had been sufficient for the Gentiles, who had no revealed Word; and by the same reason must have been sufficient for the *Jews*, admitting that no Prophecies had been imparted to them; Because this Supposition would render Their case and that of the Gentiles in this respect the same.

(o) Exod. iii. 7, 10.
v. 1, 23. vi. 7. vii. 16.
viii. 1, 20.
ix. 1, 13.
x. 3, &c.
Heb. xi. 25.
(p) Rom. iv. 11. Gal. iii. 17. compare Gen. xvii. 10, 13.

3. And yet I must add, *Thirdly*, That, considering the deference paid to Predictions of future Contingencies among the Heathens themselves, Prophecies and their respective Accomplishments well made out may very naturally be supposed as proper a Motive of Faith, even to These, as Miracles of any other sort. And therefore They, who make just Reflexions upon the best and wisest Heathen Authors, such as have left no ground for suspecting them of Superstition or too easy a Credulity, will think great wrong done to this Argument, by them who affirm, that Prophecies, well attested and strictly fulfilled, would not be admitted with the very Gentiles, as a competent Foundation of Doctrines brought by persons so predicting, though such as were in no degree known or believed before.

4. But, then we may very confidently affirm, *Fourthly*, That, to the *Jews*, Arguments of this kind were indispensably necessary, nay even stronger Motives of Assent in this case than any sort of Miracles whatsoever. *Necessary*, because to Men, who had received these Prophecies as of Divine Authority, the Truth of God stood bound to see them performed: And therefore These were not only Instructions to whom they ought, but Warnings to whom they must not hearken, as the *Messiah*. For the accomplishing or not accomplishing the Predictions allowed to concern that Character was sufficient to determine the Title of any that should take it to himself. And to Them again *stronger* proof than Miracles apart; because Those were common to Others, but These peculiar to Him. Hence, in his Answer to the Baptist's Disciples, our Lord's Appeal lies not to Miracles in *(q)* general, but to such of them more especially as were predicted of the *Messiah*. Any other Miracles would have proved *Jesus* a Prophet, but none but such as were express Marks left for that purpose, could distinguish him from the rest, and prove him to be the Great and generally expected Prophet. And thus the Testimony of Miracles was comprehended in that of Prophecy. Again, This was a *stronger* Motive to the *Jews*, because Miracles were an Evidence

(q) Matth.
xi. Luke vii.
compare
Ma. xxxv.
and lxi.

Evidence to Mankind at large; But Prophecies fulfill'd were calculated for the Circumstances of that People, and would, if rightly weighed, have obviated all the Difficulties used, or even possible, to be objected by them. This Argument refers them to their own Scriptures, proceeds upon already granted Principles, asks nothing but the comparing Predictions believed to be God's, with the Events attested by their own Senses. And, since they allow the Events to be ordered, and the Predictions inspired, by the same God, a God unchangeable and always consistent with himself; These Accomplishments seem to be a reasonable Answer to any rash Objections grounded upon a supposed Contrariety between the Law and the Gospel. For, Is it an Imagination to be entertained, nay so much as to be endured, by any who think reverently of God, That a Work of Love and Wonder, so great as the sending his Son to redeem the World, should be in agitation full Four thousand Years: That each succeeding Age in this long Space should have some notice of it; That the several Characters he was to sustain should be as it were parcell'd out to be communicated by so many different hands, living at times and places so remote, that any Confederacy between them was absolutely impossible; That each in his turn should, if I may so say, draw a Feature, and leave a distinguishing Stroke behind him; That One should describe his Parentage, Another the Time, Another the Place, Another the uncommon Manner of his Birth; Some the most remarkable Actions and Events of his Life; Several the most Minute and altogether Singular Circumstances of his Death; Others his Resurrection, nay the very Day of it; Others his Ascent to the Throne of God, and the perpetual duration of his Kingdom: That all this should be done, not in Words only, but, the more to awaken Men's Observation, in Facts too: That, besides a Worship, a Temple, a City and State Typically Prophetical, several Eminent Persons should be raised up, like so many Sketches or rough imperfect Draughts, Copies and Models in little, resembling this Eminent Prophet, Priest, and

King ; Some in one Lineament or Capacity, some in another ; But above all, that every one of these Strokes or Touches should be directed by the unerring Hand of God, to make at last One finished Picture ; on purpose that the Original, when brought in view, might be infallibly known, by being compared with those Lines and Characters drawn at least Four hundred Years before : That the Salvation of Thousands of Millions of Souls should depend upon acknowledging the Person thus typified and foretold : And yet that the Lover of Souls and the God of Truth should appoint, nay or so much as permit, any Person to be in every Part and Line exactly like that Piece, who was not the very designed Original ; This, I say, take it all together, is an Imagination so infinitely absurd, that it at once over-turns all our Notions of the Wisdom, and Truth, and Goodness of God. It does not only contradict the great Intent of all Revealed Religion, but can never be admitted without Violence and manifest Affront to natural Reason it self.

* Serm. vii.
p. 7, 8.

Now This we maintain to be the very Case of *Jesus* of *Nazareth* ; and think the First and Fourth of those Objections, laid down the Last Day against Our Interpretation of Prophecies, altogether invalidated by what hath been urged here, added to the Reasons for the Obscurity of Prophecies assigned under my *First* Head. And if This be indeed the case, shall Any who calls himself Christian so far betray the Cause of his Religion, as to say, that the Predictions of the Old Testament, as fulfill'd in *Jesus*, and referr'd to him in the New, are not proper, are not in truth most powerful Arguments to create a Belief of his being the *Messiah* ? Must we believe it, before these can be of any use to us ? And, can they then do us no farther Service, than merely to satisfy us somewhat more fully in Matters, the belief whereof was established sufficiently and already effected without them ? By what we are able to judge of our Lord and his Apostles, They seem to have been of quite another mind. Else why did He refer the *Jews* so often to their own Scriptures, as testifying of Him ? Why set about persuading the Men of *Nazareth* with a (*r*) remarkable Passage in *Isaiah*, and declaring it that Day fulfill'd in their Ears ? Why did he ground the necessity of his Sufferings upon that of the Scriptures (*s*) being fulfilled in him ; which, according to the Notion I am arguing against, had their proper End before, and lay under no necessity of being accomplished in Him at all ? When the Disciples at *Emmaus*, and the Apostles at *Jerusalem*, were to be eased of their melancholy Distrusts, and settled in the belief of his being the *Messiah*, notwithstanding his ignominious

(*r*) Luke
iv. 18, --
21.
(*s*) Matth.
xxvi. 53,
54.

minious Death and Sufferings, Was not this (t) done by beginning at *Moses* and *all the Prophets*, and so expounding the things concerning himself? Was it not by opening their Understandings that they might understand the Scriptures; and making it plain, that because *thus it was written*, therefore *thus it behoved Christ* to suffer and to rise again the Third Day? And was all this at last with great Solemnity only to amuse and entertain them with Mystical Allusions and pretty Applications of Texts, which in their primary intention did not concern him at all? Do not St. Peter and St. Paul perpetually attack both *Jews* and *Profelytes* this way, and draw their Reasonings up to this main Point, of (u) *Jesus* being the Person, to whom all the Prophets gave witness? Was the beginning with a Passage in *Isaiah*, a proper setting out for *Philip's* Conversion (w) of the *Eunuch*? Or could *Apollos* arguing from Scriptures have so mightily convinced the *Jews*, upon our Adversaries Terms? But above all, was it a reasonable Reproof, to tell the *Jews*, that the Cause of their great Sin in crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory, was this, that they neither knew him, (x) nor the Prophets, and yet at the same time fulfilled them in condemning him? That is, They understood not *Jesus* to be the Person meant by those Prophecies, though they understood well enough the *Messias* to be meant by them? Instances of this kind were endless, and They are every whit as needless. For what can we desire more to prove Prophecies and their Accomplishments a Motive of Conversion and Faith in the very strictest Sense, than the employing these perpetually to make Men Believers, and the imputing to the ignorance or inconsideration of these the misery and sin of their continuing Unbelievers? In truth this medium is insisted on much more than that of Miracles; And that of *Jesus* his Miracles was therefore irresistible, because comprehended in, and exactly consonant to, the Prophecies concerning the *Messias*. To these I could add the Reasonings of *Justin*, the Concessions of *Trypho*, the Allegations of *Tertullian*, the Testimonies of St. *Cyprian*, the Method taken by St. *Augustin* with *Faustus* and *Adimantus*, the whole Stream of the Fathers, and the Sense of the Second Council (y) of *Constantinople*, in their condemnation of *Theodorus* of *Mopsuestia*. All these are formal Vouchers for the Force and Propriety of this Topick, and as express Disclaimings of those false Positions, which some late Hereticks (and it were well if Hereticks only,) have advanced in their Expositions of Scripture, to the manifest prejudice of the Truth, and weakning of the Christian Cause. For, if allowed, they wrest a Noble Weapon out of our Hands;

(t) Luke
xxiv. 25, 44, 45, 46.

(u) Acts
ii, iii, x,
xiii, xxvi.

(w) Act.
viii. 35, 36.

(x) Acts
xiii. 27.

(y) Concil.
Edit. Labbe.
Lut. Paris
1671. Tom.
5. Concil.
Constantinop. iii.
Collat. iv.
Art. 20, 21.

One 22, 23, 24.

One of our best Guards when used on the Defensive, and of the keenest Edge when turn'd against our Adversaries.

I have now done with the Points of Dispute proposed, but still must entreat your Patience for a short Application from the whole.

(z) 1 Kings
xvii. 24.

(1.) Now here, *First*, Could we have reasonable hopes of being heard, it might be proper to expostulate the Case, why the *Jews* still persist in refusing to believe *Jesus* a true Prophet. When *Elijah* restor'd the Widow's Son to Life, she immediately cryed out, *Now (z) I know that thou art a Man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in thy Mouth is Truth.* And Reason good: For is it not a Rule with the *Jews*, that Miracles, ordinarily speaking, prove the Worker of them to be a Man of God? And yet this Evidence, as hath been shewn, is incomparably stronger for *Jesus*, than for any Person that ever God sent into the World. When S. Paul closes his Address to

(a) Acts
xxvi. 27.

Agrippa, 'tis with this significant Question, *King Agrippa, (a) believest thou the Prophets?* And Reason good: For is it not another Rule with the *Jews*, that he is a true Prophet who is attested to by other

(b) Acts
xxvi. 22.

Prophets? Now We who preach Christ, say (b) *no other things than Moses, and all the Prophets did say should come*; And farther, to prevent all Mistake in the Application of such distant Predictions, *John* Baptist shewed him present, and peremptorily declared that this was

(c) John i.
29, 34.

(d) Mark
xi. 32.

(e) John x.
41.

(f) Deut.
xxviii. 22.

the Son (c) of God and Saviour of the World. But *all Men*, we are told, (d) *accounted John to be a Prophet indeed*; Why then do these Successors of them who held him such, abjure the Confession of their more ingenuous Forefathers, that *all things John (e) spoke of this Man were true*? The Law says, (f) *When a Prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing come not to pass, the Lord hath not sent him.* Have they not hereupon form'd another Rule, that He, who foretels future Events which do come to pass, is a true Prophet? Now which of all the Predictions of *Jesus* hath God suffered to fall to the Ground? Are not those concerning Themselves in particular verified by the concurring Testimony of Sixteen hundred Years? Let them say, if the destruction of their City and Temple, their broken Polity, their long Dispersion, their sore Calamities, their merciless Persecutions, their Blindness and Obstinacy, have left them any Refuge from this Argument, except that of denying, that these things are foretold, or that they are fulfill'd. The former must be against all Reason, the latter against their own Sense and sad Experience. Nay, even thus

* Lib. adv.
Judeos. in
fin.

they have no Refuge left; For, (as *Tertullian** urges with the acuteness so familiar to him,) they even thus do but confirm the Truth, and in the very act and instant of Denying more eminently fulfil our Lord's Predictions.

But,

But, if our Reasonings will not prevail for their Conviction, at least we might reasonably entreat these unperfuadable Men, that they would leave off the invidious and indirect Methods too long in use, for giving their People the worst of Impressions against us and our Doctrine: That they would henceforth forbear to revile the Holy Name of *Jesus* in their Books, with Lies and Blasphemies not fit to be repeated; to curse his Disciples in their daily Prayers; to impose upon the World with counterfeit Histories and corrupted Chronology; to impute to the Principles of our Religion the Injuries or Barbarities, of which either their own Provocations or the Coverousness of their Enemies have been the real Cause; to take Sanctuary in Oral Laws and Traditions of suspected Credit, contrived on purpose to evacuate the written Word of God, and the Evidence this produces against them. All which are Proceedings, from whence no other Effects can in reason be expected, but those of rendring their own Minds more violently averse from the Gospel; and of provoking God to give them up to strong Delusions, that They might believe a Lie, who take such wicked pains not to give Truth a fair impartial Hearing.

2. But, *Secondly*, Whether our Adversaries will suffer any Discourses of this kind to have their intended Effect upon them or not; yet, sure I am, Christians may profit themselves of them very greatly. Let Us therefore by all means, my Brethren, give earnest heed, from hence to learn the true Grounds, to form a right Notion, to discover the charming Beauties, and to make a just Estimate, of our most Blessed Religion. None of which can be done to so good purpose any other way, as by observing its exact Congruity with, its punctual Completion of, its adorable Excellencies above those Meaner, Typical, and Subordinate Dispensations; Which, like the Dawnings of the Morning, and the gradual Advances of the Sun, increased in Light and Warmth, till they at last shone out in this bright Noonday of Righteousness. Let us admire and praise the Wisdom of that Providence, which left not his Blessed Gospel to stand upon Evidences purely its own; but hath ordained irresistible Strength for it out of the Mouths and Scriptures of its bitterest Enemies. But why do I call them Their Scriptures? They are in truth no longer Theirs but Ours. Ours, in the primary Intent of them, as containing *Ensamples (b) and Admonitions, written for Us upon whom the Ends (b) 1 Cor. of the figurative World are come.* Ours by the right of Custody and Pre- x. 6, 11. servation; It being (humanely speaking) due to the Christian's Concern in and Care of them, that neither the Persecutors of the *Jews* have been able to destroy, nor the Malice of those *Jews* themselves to corrupt them. Ours, as answering their Design, and holding the Life and Substance, while their former Proprietors have sunk and lost them in a Dead Letter. Ours, as maintaining their Divine Authority, by constantly acknowledging

knowledging the Accomplishment of their Types and Predictions ; which They denying, have made God a Liar, and his Word a trifling Fable : For, if the New Testament be false, neither can the Old Prophecies be true, nor the Levitical Law of any significance worthy of God to institute it for. Let Us again from hence learn to receive the Faith, and obey it in the love thereof ; be wise by the Calamities of Others ; and remember St. Paul's Admonition in the like Case, *(i)* Rom. xi. 20, not to be *high-minded*, but to *fear, lest, if God (i) spared not the natural Branches, he also spare not Us*, if we grow Wild, and bear not Fruit meet for the *Good Olive Tree*, into which his Mercy hath *engrafted Us*. And, since it is Our indispensable Duty, Our peculiar Glory, to *love (k) our Enemies*, and to *blest those that curse Us*, and *pray for such as despitefully use Us and persecute Us* ; Let us not fail to embrace all fitting Opportunities of expressing our Kindness and Compassion for this once Elect People of God, whose violent Prejudices recommend them to our Pity as we are Christians, and whose unparallel'd Miseries call up our Bowels, as we are Men : It becomes us then, treading in our Master's Steps, to be Ears to these Deaf, and Eyes to these Blind ; Engaging their Attention by our Courtesy, softning their Passions, contending meekly with their Errours, conquering their Prejudices by an invincible Charity, and ever labouring by our Arguments, but especially by our Examples, to win them over to their own Happiness, and restore them to that high Place in the Favour of God from which they are so deplorably fallen. And, though it be but too true, that *Briers and Thorns* *(l)* Ezek. ii. 6, 7. *(l) are among them, and they are most rebellious*, yet the Blessing and Grace of God forbids us to despair of doing somewhat, after plenteous Examples of a successful Zeal in * Persons well prepared and vigorously engaged in this difficult Undertaking. But let us put the very worst of the Case, that they reward *us evil* *for good (n)*, and *and hatred for our good will* ; Is it not enough that *(o) the Disciple be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord* ? Is it to be wondered that they *who call'd him Beelzebub*, should afford those of his Household no better Treatment ? Endeavours of this kind are indeed too seldom successful ; Few in comparison can be, and Fewer yet (the more the pity,) are desirous to be qualified for them. But I have one Expedient in reserve still, which, as all are capable of, so none can ever apply without good Profit : Profit to Them for whose sake it is used, or Profit to himself that uses it. Our hearty constant Prayers to God I mean ; Prayers which we ought not to neglect for the very Enemies of his Son, since even that Son did not disdain to pour them out with his own Blood upon the Cross. He mingled them with his dying Agonies, and shall We be wanting in this Testimony of our Charity and Zeal ? We of the Church of England more especially, whose Service *(p)* on the Day of that Dearest Lord's Passion, hath put into our Mouths a pious Request, which well becomes the Mouths of all her Members, not on that only but on every Day. Even that our Merciful God, *who hath made all Men, and hateth nothing that he hath made, nor willeth the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live ; would have Mercy upon all Infidels, Jews in particular, and take from them all Ignorance, Hardness of Heart, and Contempt of his Word. Yea, Blessed Lord, so fetch them home to thy Flock, that they may be saved among the number of the true Israelites, and be made with Us One Fold under One Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, World without End. Amen.*

F I N I S.